

Unions' Reliance On Politicians Leads to Mass Layoffs, Pages 3-4

Sweeney, AFL-CIO Back Massacre of Iraqi Workers, Page 3

CHALLENGE



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Bosses Tell Workers in Iraq, U.S.: DROP DEAD

U.S. rulers have done in Iraq what they do better than anyone else: murder and terrorize workers. The mass slaughter and devastation of civilians count among Bush's "greatest achievements" to date. Otherwise, the U.S. military victory against a vastly over-matched Iraqi army has isolated the Washington warmakers politically and sharpened every important problem they face in their drive to maintain world domination.

Bush's "liberation" of Iraq is the liberation of the grave. The bombing of every major city has led to a severe health crisis.

- By March 31, half of Basra's 1.5 million population lacked drinking water.

- According to a January 2003, UN document estimating the human costs of a U.S. war in Iraq, as many as 500,000 Iraqis could require treatment as a result of direct or indirect injuries.

- The same report predicts that 39% of the country's 25 million people will not have drinking water and that a large number of workers will succumb to disease.

- The report adds that over three million people — two-thirds of them children — will find themselves in a "dire" nutritional situation and that as many as 900,000 Iraqis will

have been forced into refugee status.

Largely because of genocidal sanctions forced on the Iraqi people by U.S. imperialism since 1991, 16 million — 60% of the population — depended on monthly government food rations for survival.

Tens of millions of workers and others aren't fooled by the new "freedom" Bush and his cronies have bestowed upon Iraq. The Feb. 15 anti-war marches in most major cities around the world were the largest one-day international mobilization in history. Despite their many political limitations, they reflect growing mass hatred against U.S. imperialism. Within this movement, many can be won to a revolutionary communist perspective.

Many workers, who don't necessarily participate in these marches, feel increasingly disaffected from Bush & Co. In the U.S., this is particularly true of black workers, who are the most oppressed and the key force for communist revolution. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer (April 6), very few black workers support the war. This is a potential nightmare situation for U.S. rulers. Black people constitute 12% of the population

continued on page 2

Liberal Oakland Mayor Orders Cops' Attack on Anti-war Protestors



OAKLAND, CA, April 7 — Today, PLP members along with hundreds of other demonstrators showed up at the American President Lines (APL) berth at the Port of Oakland for an anti-war action. Together with the ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union), the protest was designed to create a non-violent picket line at the berth's gate to stop the loading of military cargo. The ILWU contract bars members from picketing but they could be sent home if their working conditions were considered "unsafe" (that is, if others staged a picket line.)

Under orders from "ultra-liberal" mayor Jerry Brown, the Oakland police department was determined to crush the protest from the start. The cops harassed drivers as they unloaded protesters at the initial meeting place and stopped shuttle vans at the port entrance. Once the picket line began in front of APL, the cops gave the order to disperse "within three minutes." After one minute, and with no provocation whatsoever, the cops opened up with wooden and rubber bullets, tear gas and concussion grenades. Many people were shot at nearly point-blank range, most in the back as they ran. Those who didn't run fast enough were brutally arrested.

After regrouping at a transit center, people noticed grapefruit-sized welts on their bodies from the wooden bullets. One woman suffered a concussion. As we learned later, one ILWU member had to have surgery. All told some 30 people were injured by the fascist cops. Despite

this, an ILWU member reported that APL was shut down that day.

The fear created by this attack was evident. As people formed a second picket line at another berth, the cops only had to emerge from their bus in order to scatter people. Fearful protestors began leaving immediately. Once the cops had chased the crowd from the port, they stood smugly with shotguns, letting trucks in.

After that second picket line, the protestors debated about the next step. Although some union workers in the crowd suggested going back again, the leadership made it clear the next move wasn't open to debate. Protestors marched to downtown Oakland, intending to rally at the Federal building. As the cops tried to herd the march down a deserted side street, a PLP member foiled that scheme and helped lead the march through downtown on Broadway. The police clubbed protestors and ran their motorcycles into people who "disobeyed" orders. The handful of cops had to back off as it became clear the march could not be stopped. The role played by the PLP member enabled us to distribute all of our CHALLENGES and leaflets and have good political discussions with other protestors.

One key weakness was the lack of involvement of ILWU workers. The union leadership should have organized to put members on the picket lines to shut the entire port. Had the workers come out, the cops could have been defeated.

continued on page 3

EDITORIAL | Bombs Wreck Iraq; Bush & Co. Loots U.S. Cities

continued from front page

and 21% of the armed forces. A young college student said, "Bush is more of an immediate threat to me than [Saddam Hussein]." As U.S. imperialism's military adventures spread throughout the Persian Gulf, we could see mass militancy erupt both inside and outside the armed forces. Our Party can encourage and organize this opposition and win workers and soldiers to a revolutionary solution and to join PLP.

The rulers are also increasingly isolated from the rest of the world's major bosses. On the one hand, no individual or group of rivals can prevent U.S. rulers from occupying Iraq and preparing new wars in Iran, Syria or Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, each U.S. "victory" brings problems that further complicate the U.S. juggernaut.

All U.S. rulers agree on maintaining world supremacy through control over Middle Eastern energy sources, and all agree on the need for more wars of conquest and occupation. Nonetheless, important tactical differences persist, and our Party must lead workers to reject the "lesser evil" trap posed by the liberal politicians. The New York Times (April 13) editorializes: "The U.S. must sheath its sword until really needed."

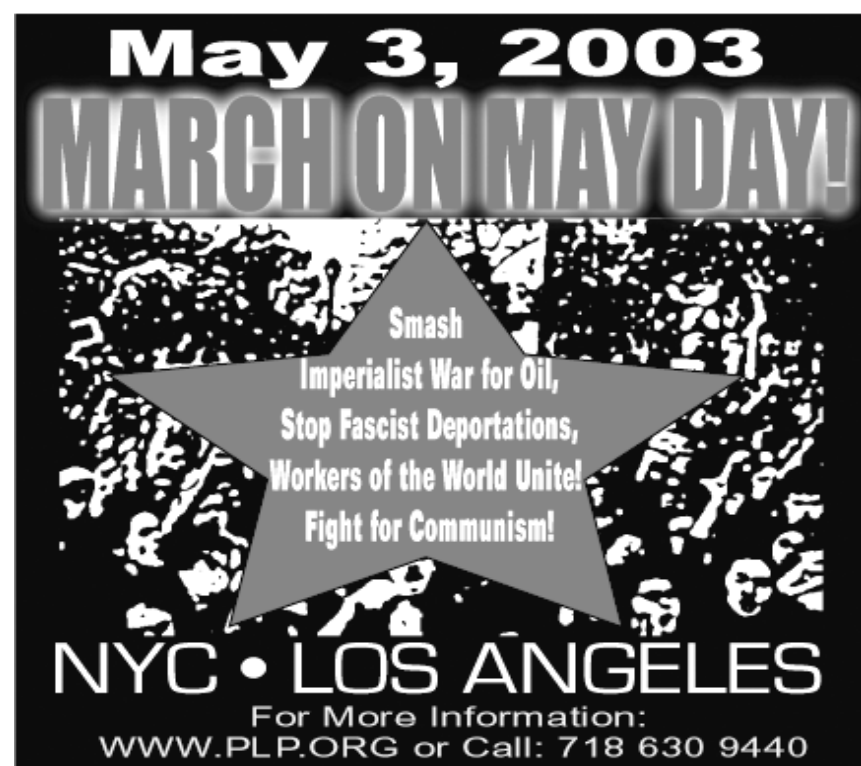
The Times opposed Bush's rush to war in March, arguing that he should wait until striking a deal for sharing oil profits with French and Russian bosses. When Bush launched the war, the Times scrambled to get on board, flush with triumphant headlines. Now the Times and other liberal mouthpieces for the Establishment want to get back to their own tactical agenda,

which includes building the type of military required for seizing and holding all the major oil-producing countries. This approach conflicts with the Rumsfeld line of relying on heavy bombing and a small number of ground forces. Oil must be pumped on the ground, and the liberals worry that the U.S. infantry is too small and too overextended to conquer and occupy Iran and Saudi Arabia.

They want to prepare the political conditions to restore the draft. Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel's Big Lie is that compulsory military service is the only way to reduce the class inequities in the present U.S. military. Rangel doesn't care about social justice. He wants to provide the U.S. war machine with more cannon fodder.

This raises another problem. The political motivation of the troops, which wasn't seriously tested in Iraq, is very shaky. The bosses can still field the world's best-equipped, most destructive military. But even the highest level of destructive technology requires human brains and hands to run it. This is U.S. imperialism's Achilles' Heel, both inside and outside the armed forces.

The liberals blame Bush for squandering the "opportunity" of 9/11 to build aggressive patriotism. They hope for another "cataclysmic" event as a way of promoting war fever. Our Party faces a future of tough challenges in the years and decades ahead. U.S. imperialism's future is no less difficult. Each of its "solutions" creates sharper problems. As its mass murder for world domination expands, its isolation from the world's masses and the rest of the world's



On Saturday May 3rd

Brooklyn, New York— At the corner of Parkside

Avenue and Ocean Avenue @12:30 pm

Q train to Parkside Avenue

Los Angeles, CA — Olympic and Broadway @ 1pm

rulers will continue to sharpen. The weakened economy will give the U.S. reduced maneuverability to grant concessions to workers. We all face a future of more stick and less carrot.

The source of these contradictions is the capitalist profit system. Progressive Labor Party's ability to politically lead the erupt-

ing class struggle can enable us to grow, both in numbers and political strength. The young workers who march with us on May Day, 2003, will provide the first gauge of our success in building upon this new opportunity. ☺

Capitalist Killer on the 'Home Front' — Mass Unemployment

While U.S. imperialism is killing workers in Iraq, capitalism is killing workers' jobs here. The government reports — themselves suspect — 108,000 jobs were lost in March. That's 2.4 million jobs gone in the last two years, the longest stretch without job growth in 20 years.

While the unemployment rate "remained" at 5.8%, that figure (conveniently) omits five million jobless workers who have given up looking for non-existent jobs but are NOT counted as unemployed.

Add those 5 millions to the 8.5 million "officially" unemployed plus:

- the several million working part-time who want but can't find full time jobs;
- those on welfare who also would work if there were jobs available;

- the one million in prison for non-violent crimes who in most other countries would not be incarcerated.

If all these were correctly counted as unemployed, the amount of jobless would

'While the unemployment rate "remained" at 5.8%, that figure (conveniently) omits five million jobless workers who have given up looking for non-existent jobs but are NOT counted as unemployed.'

approach 20 million and the rate would more than double, to about 14%.

Meanwhile, black and Latino workers suffer double the jobless rates of white workers because of racist discrimination — first fired, last hired.

All sectors of the economy showed job losses. For manufacturing it was the 36th consecutive month. And the March figures do not include recent airline layoffs nor state and city cutbacks like the 5,400

getting the axe in New York City. Businesses have shown increased sales but have cut jobs anyway because they can get the remaining workers who fear layoffs to work harder, increasing productivity — for the boss.

Why the continued job losses? "Businesses simply aren't sufficiently profitable to fuel new hiring," says Richard Yamarone, New York economist for Argus Research. "Why would you," he answers, "when you have slipping demand, skyrocketing productivity and global overcapacity?" (New York Times, 4/5)

So there it is. Capitalism in crisis "solves" its problems on the backs of the working class, again and again. To Iraq's workers we say, if this is the "democracy" U.S. rulers plan for you, watch out! Only international working-class unity to dump this inhuman system can solve perpetual unemployment. ☺

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

☺PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.

☺Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

☺Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money

and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

☺Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

☺Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

☺Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☺Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!



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TRANSIT WORKERS MUST BYPASS LEADERS AND SHUT CHICAGO DOWN!

CHICAGO, IL April 7 — More than 400 members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 241 were in a fighting mood at tonight’s union meeting. President Lee Robinson faced a sea of opposition as he gave his report, but it could have been anyone on the Executive Board. Finally he said, “If the membership wants me to sit down, I’ll sit down.” The auditorium rocked as everyone said in one voice, “SIT DOWN!”

On March 18, over 5,000 workers (almost 90%!) rejected the tentative agreement between the union and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). We’ve been without a contract for almost three years. The proposed 4-year agreement would impose “Rostering,” which means drivers who work less than 8 hours while covering 12-to-15 hour split-shifts would no longer be guaranteed 8 hours pay. Overtime would be paid only after 40 actual hours worked. It would increase the number of part-timers to

25% of the workforce, increase the hours they can work, and drop any restriction on their use. It also set up alternative retirement plans, threatened the existing pension fund and eliminated medical benefits to future CTA retirees.

ATU 241 members rejected similar sell-

Some Executive Board members used this meeting to bring charges against their own president for having signed the three rejected contracts without their consent, and illegally transferring \$42 million from the workers’ pension fund to the CTA. Robinson has been suspended without pay and is probably

retire. Over 1,500 workers would have retired with a new contract over the past three years, but with this contract they would have been replaced with hundreds of low-wage, part-time young workers. This is the fight of all workers — black, Latin and white, men and women, retirees and new hires.

ATU leaders say the only paths to a new contract are negotiations or arbitration. We need to send a message with a strike vote and then shut the city down! This fight can erupt into a mass anti-racist struggle at a time when racist terror is on the rise from Chicago to Baghdad. It could win the support of workers and youth who rely on mass transit while the bosses and bankers pour billions of dollars into oil wars and a fascist Homeland Security police state. That would be the best way to celebrate MAY DAY in the city that gave birth to this international working class holiday! ✪

“This is a struggle against racist attacks on a mostly black workforce. It is a struggle for the future.”

out contracts at the PACE Heritage and PACE Western suburban bus lines. One member said, “In 27 years I’ve never seen anything like it. This contract would asphyxiate the union; choke us to death.”

through. This is a struggle against racist attacks on a mostly black workforce. It is a struggle for the future. The company and the union leadership want to deprive young workers of medical benefits when they

Hospital Union’s Reliance on Politicians Leads to Mass Layoffs

NEW YORK CITY, April 13 — On a cold and snowy April 1, 40,000 healthcare workers — black, white, Asian and Hispanic — descended on Albany, NY, demanding Gov. Pataki rescind his healthcare cuts. According to state officials, this was the largest demonstration ever held in this state capital. Workers came from NYC, Long Island, Buffalo and other upstate areas. Many CHALLENGES were sold that day.

The 1199-SEIU leadership had not planned for such a large turnout, making it difficult for many workers to find their buses for their return home.

Many workers felt betrayed by the union leadership who had endorsed and financed Pataki’s re-election campaign. Then the politicians posed as workers’ friends to get funds and votes, but as one worker declared on the bus, “The politicians present a utopian outlook during an election year, promising everything under the sun but, as soon as they take office, their real face appears.”

Workers who spoke at the rally said these cuts would surely devastate their institutions and cause more pain and suffering to the patients.

The 1199 leadership, the NYC transit union head and others advocated making alliances with other politicians who opposed Pataki’s cuts. These union leaders are always misleading workers, saying we should rely on our class enemies. The hospital bosses and politicians represent the capitalist profit system. Meanwhile, the union leaders never mentioned the \$80 billion in workers’ taxes being spent for the war on Iraq. Barely one week later, the bosses’ newspapers revealed the hospital crisis brewing in NYC:

- St. Mary’s Hospital in Brooklyn will be closing it’s maternity ward, laying off 50 workers and leaving the community’s mothers without a nearby hospital in which to give birth;
- St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Greenwich Village has laid off 80 hospital workers and will cut 500 more by the fall;
- Mt. Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan is cutting 500 jobs, with 800 more to follow in the fall;
- Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx is laying off 250 workers.

Many more hospitals around the city will be facing similar cuts. The hospital bosses insist that patient care is not being compromised by these layoffs. This defies the fact that thousands of workers die each year due to lack of healthcare.

Since hospitals are run for profits, patient care will never be a priority. The capitalist-run healthcare system is bleeding the hospitals to their bones. ✪

AFL-CIO Hacks Support Massacre of Iraqi Workers

As the first bombs fell on Baghdad, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney declared, “The AFL-CIO...[is] unequivocal in support of our country and America’s men and women on the front lines...” The AFL-CIO dropped any pretense of opposition and lined up squarely behind Bush’s oil war on Iraq, showing once again that it is an instrument of U.S. imperialism. The AFL-CIO hacks call for supporting U.S. troops in order to line up workers behind an imperialist war.

The AFL-CIO boasted, “4,000 members of the maritime unions...are loading and transporting equipment, supplies and materiel to support the troops in the Persian Gulf.”

The AFL-CIO leadership chose to mobilize dockworkers to aid the war, in spite of White House union-busting when West Coast longshoremen were locked out by shippers last fall. Bush imposed a Taft-Hartley injunction and conspired with the shippers to impose a job-cutting contract. Homeland Security Fuhrer Ridge said that a strike would violate national security and threatened dockworkers with using troops as strike-breakers.

The AFL-CIO has backed every imperialist adventure by U.S. rulers, from Vietnam to Kosovo to Afghanistan. It has worked hand-in-glove with the CIA for over 50 years to crush militant and communist-led labor movements around the world. It helped the U.S. government topple left-wing governments

in Latin America, Asia and Africa and replace them with fascist torturers, like Saddam. Many “left” organizations believed that Sweeney’s rise to AFL-CIO president in 1995 was a positive step for workers. They predicted the AFL-CIO would oppose an invasion of Iraq.

In the wake of the invasion, the airline industry has announced thousands of layoffs. Tens of thousands of additional jobs are threatened by the impending bankruptcy of American Airlines and others. Companies are ripping up union contracts and imposing drastic concessions. The cost of the war will mean more racist cutbacks. The first installment will be \$75 billion, with billions more coming.

The AFL-CIO does not defend workers’ interests, and is incapable of speaking for their needs. Sweeney & Co. view the war as an opportunity to demonstrate their usefulness to the bosses by promoting patriotism and nationalism. However, they will only find themselves more isolated from the millions of workers, organized and unorganized, who oppose the war and resent their passivity in the face of increased attacks. Building a mass PLP will lead the working class out of the grips of the bosses, Democratic and Republican politicians and their servants in the AFL-CIO, and onto the road to communist revolution. ✪

Cops Attack Protestors on Brown’s Orders

continued from front page

The liberals behind the police brutality showed the true face of capitalism. This protest was not a sanctioned “die-in.” It was aimed at uniting workers with the anti-war movement and stopping the profit system’s war machine. The cops’ “non-lethal” weapons are known to be lethal at close range. Someone could have been killed. Our friends with us that day saw whose side the cops are on. This can help them understand revolution means the working class must smash the bosses’ state power. ✪



PL'ers Bring Revolutionary Answer to Anti-War Marchers



WASHINGTON, D.C., April 12 — Today over 30,000 people marched against the war and occupation of Iraq, once again demonstrating deep-seated opposition to U.S. bosses' imperialist actions. A rival, pro-war demonstration, featuring scum like G. Gordon Liddy of Watergate fame and ultrapatriotic country singer Aaron Tippin, punked out with a few hundred flag-wavers.

The anti-war march was quite smaller

than the three previous mobilizations held here because many people have despaired of influencing the government through marches. They are partially right, marches by themselves won't end imperialist wars. The Vietnamese defeated the U.S. militarily, with important help from GI rebellions. Communist revolution ended World War I in Russia. But communist participation

in these marches can help win many to see this revolutionary outlook. However, we won't get that from the current leadership of the anti-war movement.

ANSWER, which organized today's march, ignored these historical examples and continued to spread illusions about how protest itself can stop imperialism. Worse yet, they build illusions in the Democratic Party hacks as a "solution" to the

Bushite gang — nothing about revolution or a mass communist movement as the real path to defeating imperialist war, or to crush local butchers like Saddam Hussein. "Watering down" the truth is a policy of revisionists (fake leftists). Real communists tell the truth, however difficult that truth might be.

Other anti-war forces didn't attend this march because they feel the war is over; there's nothing more to protest. This is a big mistake. The coming period will be filled with endless imperialist wars. We must all sharpen the struggle on our jobs and campuses, in the military, unions, houses of worship and communities to attack imperialism and racism.

A PLP leaflet distributed widely at the demonstration called for closing ROTC, ending Defense Department research on campuses, striking against military production, GI's organizing against the war machine and smashing racist police brutality. This sharply contrasted with the words from the podium.

PLP members who participate in several

of the organizations involved in the action, joined them in the march, on the buses, and in the rally, urging the groups and individuals to make a commitment to revolution and a lifetime of struggle with the PLP.

That night, at a D.C. PLP forum, several new people came, including some from the march itself. That may well be the most important thing that could have happened at the march — more people became involved in the long-term struggle for revolution. Yet the Party as a whole can do much more to provide the leadership and build the ties needed to keep pace with the rapidly developing world imperialist crises. PLP'ers and our friends must redouble efforts at building the party and its influence. Make no mistake — revolutionary waves are building and passivity is ebbing as imperialism and fascism make their brutality more evident. We must "catch the wave" and lead the working class to international victory, from Baghdad to D.C.!

Students Organize Against Police Terror and Imperialist War

RIVERSIDE, CA — On March 20, campus cops viciously attacked a student protest against the war at a local community college. This was an extension of the unjust imperialist wars waged against the working class worldwide. Physical abuse and intimidation by local and federal police agencies are necessary to the survival of the capitalist system.

Students called for a boycott of classes to protest the war in Iraq. They received informal approval to march through one school building's hallways to draw more students from classes. When they entered the building, they were assaulted immediately without even an order to disperse. Some of the campus cops were in plain clothes and didn't identify themselves as they attacked several students leading the march.

Students demanding the release of their classmates were answered with punches, kicks, baton blows, and pepper spray in their faces. One student reported that students in custody were being "threatened, choked and walked on."

Students and community members accused the cops of trying to ambush them and instill fear in the increasingly large activist community here, as well as racist aggression. Racism was evident in the excessive violence and severity of the criminal charges brought against two Latino students. In contrast, the only white student detained received relatively civil treatment and was immediately released.

This attack is one more example of increasing attempts to suppress the voice of the working class, of which working-class students are a vital part. City cops arrive at demonstrations in full riot gear, with cameras intended to intimidate and document dissenters. The INS continues to

indefinitely detain and deport people based on racist policies. Just as U.S. rulers have attempted to "shock and awe" the Iraqi people into submission, the campus police have launched an offensive against working-class student activism. But this ratcheting-up of oppressive measures has united the campus and local community against this threat, as it continues to unite people around the world.

In response to this assault, students went ahead with their demonstration, marching and chanting down a busy city street to the nearby military recruitment center. When the group of about 200 students marched back to campus, they were confronted by city cops in full riot gear, trying to block their return.

They marched to the campus police station and demanded the police free the two arrested students. Inciting-to-riot charges were later reduced to "disturbing the peace."

Students, faculty and community members met with the school President and demanded a formal apology from the school and the suspension of the campus police who attacked the students. They also demanded that all charges be dropped, and that no charges be brought against anyone involved in the demonstration.

The students vowed not to let this abuse distract them from opposing imperialist war. One week later, they again entered the building in their most organized, disciplined march yet. Students refuse to be swept under the rug. We are learning valuable lessons about the nature of a system that makes war on the working class from Iraq to California, as well as the long-term nature of the fight to change it. ☛

Red Leadership On NYC Cuts Crucial to Break Out of Reformist Box

NEW YORK CITY, April 14 — City workers are apprehensive, knowing cutbacks and layoffs are imminent. Workers, as always, are bearing the brunt of capitalism's growing crisis. Black and Latin workers, who comprise a large percentage of city workers here, are especially victimized by these racist cuts. Across the country state and local governments are slashing services to pay for widespread deficits, federal tax cuts to the rich and the oil war in Iraq. Now with the war in Iraq virtually over, Mayor Bloomberg comes out swinging, announcing another 5,400 layoffs. Working people are forced to fight for jobs and basic services. And the union leaders? They're holding press conferences, if that.

Here AFSCME's District Council 37, the largest municipal union, has scheduled a demonstration for April 29 as negotiations end, and is doing almost nothing to build for it. The City rulers have just screwed the transit workers and are preparing a similar fate for DC 37. No one's organizing city workers to hit the bosses where it hurts — on the job.

City services are being privatized. Corporate taxes have declined for the last 30 years. A 5¢ tax on all stock sales was abolished in 1982 (re-instituting even a 2¢ tax would abolish the city deficit). Assessments of commercial real estate have been dropping since 1991, even though sale values have been skyrocketing. The city increased homeowners' property taxes 18%, but haven't raised commercial taxes at all. Meanwhile, the city unions are explaining how the city bosses could cover their deficit, and complaining that the City isn't listening. They're calling for a 1¢ stock sale tax, and even that's being rejected.

The union publicists ignore one basic fact: the bosses don't care about workers' suffering, in New York or Baghdad. Workers are caught between politicians and union hacks who spin endlessly about why we have to take cutbacks, layoffs, speed-up and give-backs.

Breaking out of this box means mobilizing against the cuts, by-passing the union hacks and going directly to the rank and file to demonstrate, picket, slow down, work to rule, walk off for as long as it takes, to know that when one union goes out, all go out. Otherwise we're defenseless.

Many workers are reluctant to move without

union authorization, but many are angry, both at the situation and the inaction of leaders whose large salaries are paid with our dues. Real class leadership means exposing capitalism, and not collaborating with the "better" bosses or politicians. Appealing to politicians is like spitting in the wind. No matter who the union leaders support, Pataki or the Democrats, we're still facing these massive attacks.

There is mass support for fighting back. Working people can and do link layoffs to the devastating cuts in social services. Meanwhile the union leadership doesn't reach out to the working class, negotiates in secret, advocates "fair budgets," and begs the City to make the layoffs "equitable."

Communists need to give class struggle leadership: demand rank-and-file formulation of demands, including no layoffs, no give-backs, no cuts, and form rank and file committees to organize walk-outs to oppose the bosses' plans. It means linking tax cuts for the rich and funding for imperialist war to the hits we're taking; pointing out the racist nature of the cuts and the layoffs.

The profit system keeps us on a treadmill — they cut, we fight, the cycle goes on and on. As long as we have capitalism, we must fight, but until we get rid of capitalism, the system will keep us in this perpetual wrestling match just to feed our families.

Change can only come from building PLP out of leading militant class struggle. Otherwise, we'll listen once again to why the next lousy contract is "the best we could have hoped for," and swallow seeing our brothers and sisters laid off and scrambling to feed their families. We can mobilize for demonstrations like the one on the 29th, but if we don't exert militant class leadership, communist leadership, we'll just wind up shouting that afternoon, and watching the cuts on the evening news. ☛



MAY DAY MESSAGE SPARKS FIGHT AGAINST RULERS

(The following is excerpted from a speech by a young comrade at a recent May Day dinner attended by over fifty workers and students, including a dozen Boeing workers and their families. The speaker had just returned from the struggle at a MEChA conference. See letter, below)

Seeing you all here tonight gives me hope, so I thank you. There is a war going on, of one imperialist butcher against a local butcher. There's no justice in such wars fought by our working-class brothers and sisters while the rich rulers stay safe. They think that by arresting, deporting and killing our brothers and sisters they make the world safe — safe for imperialism and capitalist exploitation, while we are told to sacrifice "for the good of our country."

What sacrifices have we made so far? Half of my friends are out of work. They want me to sacrifice half my friends, but I refuse. I also have friends in the military. They want me to sacrifice them as well, but I will not. I have many friends who, once they implement all of their "security" procedures, will be harassed and labeled "ter-

rorists." They want me to sacrifice them as well. That's almost everyone I know! I won't do it!

The ruling class is very smart and very powerful. But we are even more powerful. We control the machines that make the weapons. The workers at Boeing, some of whom are here tonight, are the ones who make the planes that bomb our brothers and sisters in Iraq. They make the planes that fly the soldiers to the Middle East. Because they control this, they have power. They can refuse to do the work. Our working-class brothers and sisters also do the fighting; they are the soldiers. No son or daughter of a rich boss will ever get near the actual fighting. It's the sons and daughters of the working class who are expendable to them. Yet, because they control the guns, they have the power. They can refuse to fight, or use the guns against their true enemy, the bosses.

There have been many times in history when this has happened. It can happen now. But we need to become organized. That's why I am so happy to see you all here. It's a step towards organizing ourselves, and it truly gives me hope.



Just last week I went to a MEChA conference. I saw hope there as well. Midway through the conference, over 500 students held an impromptu rally and march against the war in Iraq. They understood that they had power. Also, a number of faculty, staff and students at campuses here have become more involved in anti-war groups and we in PLP have been there with them every step of the way. We have also been distributing more CHALLENGES, talking to more people and increasing our

bases. This has given me the most hope.

It is our job to show the working class that there is hope for justice for our class. We must keep learning and teaching. One of my favorite ways of learning is to go to May Day. We march every year in the heart of Los Angeles' garment district. This year it's May 3rd. Every year I go I learn more and I have more hope. All the people here tonight should march. I assure you it will be a worthwhile experience. ☺

NO 'FREE SPEECH' FOR ANTI-WORKER POLITICS

Activities in an anti-Iraq war union caucus on a West coast campus has initiated a struggle over a class outlook on "free speech" and whether unions should support anti-working class politics.

A petition urging the Local's leadership to make an anti-war statement is being circulated, an educational piece has been written and a poster has been designed for our union bulletin boards. All this has involved more than 30 rank-and-file members, who have been talking to their co-workers and getting feedback and

Of course, unions have always been political. The question is, do they embrace the politics of the working class or do they tail behind the bosses?

encouragement.

This has forced the union to E-mail the membership announcing formation of our caucus and inviting participation, stirring up controversy. Nasty mail came from some of the more right-wing, "love-it-or-leave-it" union members, suggesting that the union "has no business being political." Of course, unions have always been political. The question is, do they embrace the politics of the working class or do they tail behind the bosses?

Some have said the pro-war members could form their own caucus if they want to, advocating "free

speech," in which every position should be heard. The Party member and friends in this caucus have explained that imperialist war destroys the working class, that the union should never support any anti-working class position. Theoretically the unions represents the workers, even though we know they've become an arm of the Democratic Party. A PL'er raised the question, if we had an anti-racist caucus, would the union also support the formation of a racist caucus? Communists believe in struggling around ideas, changing tactics and strategies, but all on behalf of fighting for the working class and building the Party. Support for racism, sexism and imperialism are not up for discussion.

Meanwhile, the university plans a "day of reflection." Faculty and students are free to attend and classes can be canceled. Staff, on the other hand, cannot leave work. We're urging the caucus to demand staff be free to attend and call for a strike if the university won't allow it.

These issues present opportunities to win the membership to understand what benefits workers and see the need to fight for our lives. Current events offer favorable circumstances for class struggle.

The Party member can win a number of workers to the left, using CHALLENGE to stimulate discussion beyond the caucus meetings. He's developing friendships with a number of caucus members, and is spreading CHALLENGE among them. This can lead to bringing some caucus members to May Day. ☺

Anti-War Militants Seize the Day At MEChA Conference

The 10th Annual National MEChA Conference was held at the Univ. of California at Berkeley on March 29-30. MEChA is a Chicano student organization and has a reputation for being extremely nationalist and/or apolitical (organizing dances and BBQs, but doing little else). However, that's not true at our school. We've been active in our campus chapter for three years and have developed a small group of CHALLENGE readers.

About 1,000 high school and college students and community people came. We discussed a resolution against the war in Iraq while riding on the vans going to the conference, hoping this would raise the level of struggle among our friends and in the entire group. We decided to broaden the resolution to include imperialism and the Patriot Act.

Although normally resolutions must be submitted 60 days in advance, fortunately many people there liked ours and helped push it to the floor. Unable to stop it, the conference leadership tried to change its thrust to one of opposing violence in general. The arguments made by the many friends we made at the Conference defeated this pacifist outlook, maintaining its anti-imperialist content.

At a workshop discussing Marxism-Leninism and the possibility of armed revolution, many of the 50 people attending agreed we eventually would need a revolution in order to change the system. In fact, many became excited and we began to discuss the war in Iraq and why the leaders of MEChA didn't want to discuss our resolution.



That evening, during dinner, an impromptu rally against the war was held on campus. As the crowd quickly grew to over 500, many people felt the energy and wanted to march into the neighborhood, but the Conference leaders stopped them, using the excuse that the high school students didn't realize they could be arrested and that those who "instigated" it weren't concerned with their safety. In reality, high school students had taken the lead. Many had protested that it was their decision, but ultimately the march was halted.

This demonstrated the potential for real struggle and understanding in MEChA, but also the danger of the misleaders' reformism which cooled the righteous outrage of these working-class youth. This is not an isolated incident. The bosses use the misleaders of black and Latino organizations to divert anger of the working class. But as communists we recognize that such anger is an appropriate and welcome response to this system. Workers and students must utilize it in our fight against the ruling class.

A Student Comrade

LETTERS

“Later, I remembered history, which demonstrated that when the time is ripe, soldiers will turn their guns around and the workers will use whatever weapons they have to remove their never-ending exploiters.”

ARA Member

Many GI’s Not Won To Fighting

At drill last month, a sergeant whispered in my ear, “They can send me to Fort Drum or Texas, but I’m not going over to fight in Iraq.” Later on, while another soldier and I were discussing the invasion of Iraq, he joked, “Yeah, I’ll go through this pre-mobilization paperwork, but they’re crazy if they think I am going to Iraq!” Make no mistake — many soldiers are not won to fighting.

There are a few key reasons for their cynicism. First, most soldiers (especially those in the Army Reserves and National Guard) are workers who bought into the military’s pitch for college benefits. When they get called up for combat situations, many feel manipulated upon seeing that the same military supposedly guaranteeing them a better life could also be responsible for their deaths. Second, many soldiers believe that this war is personal for President Bush. In short, many, many soldiers view this war as someone else’s problem that they’re being forced to fight.

But cynicism alone will not lead soldiers to understanding the nature of capitalism and inter-imperialist rivalry, which is what this war is all about. So at one point, during our “hurry-up-and-wait” time, I organized an informal discussion with a group of soldiers about the war in Iraq. After a few minutes, one soldier cautiously informed us of his presence at an anti-war protest in March.

After some more intense exchanges, one soldier remarked, “We’re talking about all these problems, but what’s the solution?” Everyone looked at me. These soldiers are hungry for answers, and it’s our responsibility to deliver. At the time, my response was limited, but this discussion has now given me the opportunity to raise the question of communist revolution with a few more soldiers and increase my CHALLENGE distribution. Several soldiers have agreed to come to a pre-May Day dinner.

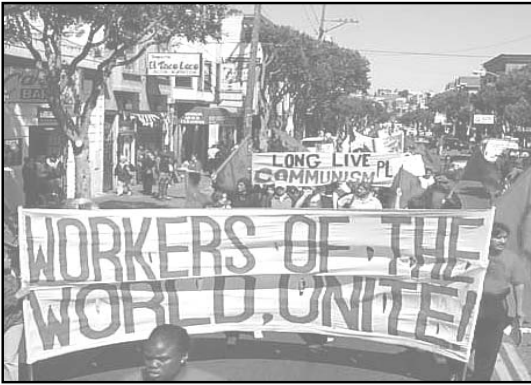
While the anti-war movement is using its pacifist line to encourage youth to avoid the military, PLP has a real solution. “Turn the guns around” is the revolutionary position that fights for the international unity among soldiers across all borders. Without an army of soldiers fighting for the liberation of the working class, a future of peace and stability will never be guaranteed for our class.

Red Soldier

Colombia: Iraq War Same as Death Squads

Contrary to “Death Squad” Uribe, Colombia’s President, workers and youth here understand very well what imperialist massacres mean. As in the rest of the world, we have had many anti-war protests, mainly led by college students, NGOs [Non-government organizations] and left-wing groups. Most workers oppose the war, since they have seen the effects of “imperialist democracy” firsthand here, where thousands of trade unionists and others have been murdered by the paramilitary death squads. But unlike the workers, the union hacks have remained silent on this war, just as they do on most attacks against workers.

A clear example is Luis Eduardo Garzón, former head of the CUT union federation. “I am tired of hating, we need reconcilia-



tion,” he said in one of the many get-togethers he’s been having with politicians seeking to “improve the system a little.”

But this system is so rotten and criminal that nothing can make it better for workers. These hacks have shown once again they are part of the problem not of the solution.

PLP members have participated in anti-war demonstrations in Colombia, distributing DESAFIO-CHALLENGE and leaflets. Contrary to union hacks and all kinds of reformists, we clearly tell workers and youth that capitalism causes war, fascist terror, unemployment, etc. Workers and capitalists have irreconcilable differences that will only intensify as the world’s rulers create more wars and death squads. The only way out of this hell is to fight for a society without any bosses: communism.

A Red Worker, Colombia

Death Penalty For Cuba Hijackers

Three persons holding 50 passengers hostage hijacked a ferry boat from Cuba and were headed to Florida but were caught by Cuban authorities, tried, found guilty and executed. Meanwhile, some 65 dissidents were jailed and sentenced to long prison terms for collaborating with Bush’s man in Havana. The Cuban government had infiltrated several agents into the dissident movement and then showed proof of how James Cason, in charge of the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba, had met with the dissidents in his house and office. Cason paid them \$100 a month to serve as spies for the U.S.

In a recent three-week period, two air taxis were hijacked and flown to Florida, along with one ferry. These were not regular “boat people” but rather part of a sinister plot.

A 1994 immigration agreement signed by the U.S. and Cuba provided for hijackers to be returned to their home country for trial. But instead of sending these international pirates back to Cuba, the U.S. treated them as minor offenders and released them on bail in Florida. Finally, the Cuban government took action and, after rescuing this last hijacked ferry boat, tried the three kidnappers and executed them.

This has sparked much controversy, even among supporters of Cuba overseas who oppose the death penalty. Some even say Cuba shouldn’t behave like Texas or other U.S. states, where the death penalty is applied regularly. I disagree.

The Cuban government fears it might be next in Bush & Company’s line of fire, particularly since the right-wing Cuban exile leadership in Miami carries a lot of weight in the Bush gang’s foreign policy. Moreover, the Cuban dissidents function mostly as paid agents of the U.S. government.

The death penalty is not above class or politics. In the U.S., it is mostly working people (a majority black and Latin) who are on

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death row for crimes caused by the racist exploitation of capitalism. Cuba, while not really the revolutionary system claimed by many of its supporters, has applied the death penalty in a very different situation. After all, if these dissidents get away with supplying the U.S. with intelligence information, Havana could become another Baghdad, killing thousands in the name of “democracy.”

Che Rojo

Bringing CHALLENGE to Peru’s Prisons

Greetings! Your bi-weekly publication is indeed a tribune reflecting the feelings of the U.S. working class and that all of us in one way or another reject imperialism and work towards a worldwide communist society. This future will only be achieved through the organized struggle of the working class.

I also want to condemn U.S. imperialism represented by Bush and his gang of butchers which, under the guise of fighting international terrorism, massacres the people of Iraq. What they call terrorism has been created by the imperialists, who dig their own grave since the world’s oppressed and exploited are fighting back internationally. It doesn’t matter what the imperialists call this struggle. For oppressed people it is one for liberation.

It is well known that the U.S.-British butchers will win this invasion of Iraq, since they have a very sophisticated genocidal military machine. But the people of Iraq have shown that one can fight back against this monster.

Here in Peru, political violence began in the 1980s between the PCP (Communist Party) and the state. Today, this violence has eased after 25,000 deaths, 80% of them murdered by the State and its armed forces. There are 1,000 political prisoners and another 1,000 hiding to avoid arrest.

Toledo, who replaced the Fujimori-Montesinos dictatorship a couple of years ago, continues with the same cruel jail system, refusing to free many who have been imprisoned for over 10 years.

A friend gave me a copy of DESAFIO-CHALLENGE. I decided to bring it to some of these prisoners. But the guards, seeing it was a communist paper, got very nervous and refused to allow it in. So I was left with the goal of bringing the paper to the prisoners in some other way.

I will keep in touch and wish you many victories.

A Friend in Peru

Retired Unionist Hits Sweeney War Cry

Unions, in general, look to John Sweeney as their leader because he is the AFL-CIO president. I’m a member of the ARA (Alliance for Retired Americans), NYC chapter, which is an arm of the AFL-CIO. Seventy of us attended the March 26

monthly meeting, discussing the Iraq War. All agreed it was bad but mainly that services would be cut due to the billions the government would spend for the military.

I said not only was the U.S. purpose to gain oil for domestic use and profit but also for the U.S. to control which consumers of which countries got the oil, at what price and that the oil was paid for in dollars, not Euros.

I noted that the war was in no way fought for democracy since the U.S. had a long record of supporting fascists like the Shah, Trujillo, Somoza, Suharto, Duvalier and every other dictator who has ever existed so long as they played the roles the U.S. wanted.

The ARA members agreed with me almost totally and made similar points. But there was one other important issue where there was less unity, the one which Sweeney always exploits — patriotism in the guise of support for U.S. troops.

This is also the line of politicians like Rangel and Clinton and of course, the media. We know some workers swallow it. I advocated, “U.S. imperialists out of Iraq now,” that this was class war, meaning we could not unite with any capitalists, Saddam included.

Afterwards, two members approached me. One, a fireman, said belligerently, “I agree with you on the oil issue but we must support the troops.” I repeated my case and left it at that. I realized that patriotism and “support your troops” are among the biggest obstacles to the unity of the U.S. working class now or anytime.

Later, I remembered history, which demonstrated that when the time is ripe, soldiers will turn their guns around and the workers will use whatever weapons they have to remove their never-ending exploiters.

ARA Member

Bosses’ Patriotism or Workers of the World Unite?

“Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” said Samuel Johnson. In the name of patriotism, several thousand people rallied at Ground Zero, NYC, on April 10 to support the slaughter of Iraqi men, women and children by the hi-tech weaponry of U.S. imperialism. CNN, FoxNews, MsNBC, the NY Post, Washington Post, etc., were full of “patriotic pride” as they covered the massacre of Iraq. It was disgusting to see the construction union hacks rally for war while thousands of jobs are being eliminated in NYC and across the country by the same bosses who perpetrated this war. But these hacks do nothing about this job massacre.

“Patriotism” seems to be a classless concept since it lumps bosses and workers together in defending “our” country. But patriotism and nationalism are ideologies favoring one class: the capitalist. The bosses very much own “our” country and use these ideologies to win workers to support bosses’ wars that are only in the bosses’ class interests and that kill our brothers and sisters around the globe. The “stars and stripes” is the bosses’ flag which represents the almighty dollar and is used to oppress the working class.

Many leaders of the anti-war movement advocate patriotism. The groups that organized the huge protests of Feb. 15

continued on next page

LETTERS Continued

and March 22 —United for Peace and Justice and Win Without Wars — are guilty of that. Medea Benjamin, of the anti-globalization group Global Exchange and leader of Win Without Wars, said the peace movement must “reclaim the flag and patriotism from the right-wingers.”

These groups want to ensure that the “progressive” elements of the Democratic Party win the next election. There already is a section of the ruling class and the Democratic Party, while not opposing the Iraq war per se, believe the Bushites are the wrong gang to do the job needed after the war to continue the U.S. bosses’ world domination. Tom Kerry, a leading Democratic running for president, already called for “regime change” in Washington. He’s setting himself up to be the candidate of the millions who opposed the war and who will continue to oppose the Bushites now that

the Iraq war appears over.

An article in the April 13 New York Times (Section 4) reviewed the history of patriotism in the U.S. — from the “Communism-is-20th-Century-Americanism” of the old Communist Party USA, to the current “peace-is-patriotic” theme of parts of the anti-war movement. That is why even though the song printed in CHALLENGE (April 16) changed the words of the patriotic song, “Rally ‘round the Flag,” I believe it’s a mistake to use it, even with a progressive anti-war line. It just perpetuates the myth that somehow patriotism is useful to workers and their allies.

We in PLP have attacked patriotism and nationalism as reactionary creatures of capitalism. We put forward the line of “Workers of the World, Unite!” and “Smash All Borders” to counter these ideas.

An “unpatriotic” Comrade

Chicago City College Cuts Hit Immigrant Workers, Teachers

CHICAGO, April 14 — Students and teachers at City Colleges here have been subjected to more attacks on their education and livelihoods. The Board of Education has been cutting back since last year when both federal and state monies began drying up. The rulers were busy rounding up and deporting some of our Arab and Latino students and beefing up their military budgets for endless imperialist wars. They have continued destroying social services, funding more war and attacking immigrant workers.

The Democratic Governor of Illinois recently announced an austerity budget with a 5% reduction for the City Colleges. At one school that’s another \$80,000 right away. Next year’s projected deficit is \$16 million. This means the District Office and each of the seven campuses must cut \$2 million.

The Board’s “solutions” include a wage and hiring freeze, firing staff, serving fewer students and shutting down schools. The Intensive Program is being eliminated. Previously the intensive English program met for 16 weeks for 16 hours a week. Now these 256 classroom

hours have been chopped to 64 — 8 hours a week for 8 weeks. Immigrant students would come from miles away for this special program.

This follows the elimination of counselors and reduction of tutors. At one school the library is closed and the computer lab has reduced time. The administration is planning to charge for classes as opposed to our free ones.

The teachers’ union sabotaged the members’ strike and the Board’s offers get increasingly insulting after each negotiating session. Teachers are being fired, especially anti-war and union activists who defend other teachers and students.

The City Colleges really don’t care about education, educators or students. The capitalist system that dictates what the City Colleges do is in crisis. The rulers’ need to dominate the world and its resources contradicts the interests of the workers who need education. The best way to oppose the rulers’ plans for more war and fascism is building the revolutionary communist PLP. Big May Day marches, dinners and events will help pave the road to revolution. ☸

In Memoriam

On March 20, my father died of cancer. While he wasn’t a giant of the communist movement, he put the “work” in working class. He quit school to go to work at age 13 and didn’t stop until he was 77. Like millions of his generation, he grew up in the Great Depression and came of age fighting fascism in World War II.

He spent 45 years as a furrier in the NYC garment center, just a few minutes from where he was born and raised on E. 4 St. He was a militant member of a communist-led union, that took on the Mafia and the Nazis and provided security for Paul Robeson’s Peekskill concerts. We grew up with stories about strikes and picket lines. He told us of following scabs into the freight elevators with a butcher knife while “Acid Arnie” sprinkled the scab fur coats, turning them to garbage. Our dinner table was

the liveliest spot in the house, full of discussion and debate — no racist jokes allowed.

He retired only to find that his union pension was less than \$100/month. After moving to Florida, he went back to work as a security guard. He said, “At my job they call me ‘The Rabbi’ because I’m always preaching to the young guys. What do I tell them? ‘Teach each other. Look out for each other.’”

In the last few weeks he said, “In the end what have you got? It’s nice to have some money when you’re working, to do things, to paint the town red. But in the end, all you’ve got is people. Anyway, the world is not about me. It’s about how you lived in it, what you did for it, and what you didn’t do. And that’s it.

He lived his life for others, for those he loved, and he always knew what side he was on. What could be more noble than that?

Red Son

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

No mass weapons found

Britain and the United States suffered a fresh blow last weekend when their main justification for war was undermined by reports that special forces have failed to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq....

John Wolf, the assistant secretary of state for non-proliferation, said that US secretary of state, Colin Powell, was desperate to find a “smoking gun.” (GW, 4/9)

After troops, anti-Muslims

Poised behind the troops, waiting for a signal that Iraq is safe enough for them to operate in, are the evangelical Christians — carrying food in one hand and the Bible in the other....

Muslim worries have been heightened because the man leading the charge into Iraq is Rev. Franklin Graham, who delivered the invocation at President Bush’s inauguration. The son of Billy Graham and a fierce critic of Islam, he is on record as calling it a “wicked” religion, with a God different from that of Christianity. “The two are different as lightness and darkness,” he wrote. (GW, 4/16)

Bechtel backs into billion

Andrew Natsios...set out last week to counter accusations that \$600m worth of contracts for reconstruction in Iraq...were examples of cronyism.

“If you need a surgeon...or a college, you seek out the names with the reputation for quality and the ability to get the job done,” he said. Strange, then, that a frontrunner is construction giant Bechtel, whose record in managing America’s biggest public

works project has been, by most accounts, disastrous....Bechtel’s record in managing the “big dig,” a \$23b project to burrow a highway under Boston....according to Senator Robert Havern:...“is the biggest works project in the history of America, and it is the largest cost overrun of any project....”

According to Pratap Chatterjee, of the California-based Corpwatch, the Halliburton subsidiary...stands to make a killing. “The main money is not in reconstruction. The main money is in supporting the troops. Whoever gets that money will be running all the army bases for an army that is not going to leave. About 80% of the budget goes to the military, and the rest on reconstruction.” (GW, 4/16)

Immigrants reject cops

Washington, April 13 — A coalition of immigrant advocacy groups is challenging the Justice Department’s decision to allow state and local police departments to pursue illegal immigrants as part of the war on terror. (NYT, 4/14)



Sounds like Syria’s next

President Bush accused Syria today of harboring senior Iraqi military and government officials and demanded “cooperation.”

...Mr. Bush also asserted that “there are chemical weapons in Syria.” (NYT, 4/14)

Red statues are different

Lately parallels have been drawn in the press between Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and the...Communists who ruled Russia....

But with polls showing that more and more Russians are looking on the Soviet past with fondness, there is a distinct possibility that one day we will see the once-toppled monuments back at the heart of Moscow. (NYT, 4/10)

Many wars after Iraq

“The national security strategy of the United States,” published in mid-September....declared that the president would take pre-emptive action against hostile

nations and terrorist groups developing chemical, biological and nuclear weapons....

“The publication of the strategy was the signal that Iraq would be the first test, but not the last,” said one senior official involved in its drafting....

Senior Pentagon officials and...counterterrorism officials have suggested that the United States government will now turn its attention to Hamas, the Palestine group that has used terrorism to fight for a Palestinian state, and Hezbollah, which has strong ties to Syria and Iran. (NYT, 4/10)

Big Iraq kill uncountable

Neither British nor American military officials will provide even rough estimates of Iraqi soldiers killed in the war....

For example, relentless bombing and a week of ground combat left the Baghdad division of Iraq’s army reduced to “zero percent strength,” according to Marine officers who engaged the division, once thought to number about 10,000 soldiers. Where are they?

One military official...said the number of Iraqi dead was certainly high but ultimately unknowable.

“In the bombing of the different divisions, the destruction there was terrifying,” the official said, speaking on condition that he not be named....

The world will probably never know how many, and no Iraqi authority is left to count them and notify their families. (NYT, 4/10)

Euro Bosses Less Than Awed of U.S. Rulers

Nazi-like “shock and awe” is a political, not just a military strategy. U.S. bosses want to intimidate any potential geopolitical competitors as much as crush any thought of Iraqi resistance to the U.S. invasion. Although the U.S. military has murdered and injured tens of thousands of civilians, the bosses’ invasion has failed on a number of political fronts.

Nowhere is the political failure more evident than in “Old Europe.” With the war barely a week old, the European Union (EU) began organizing to confront the U.S., economically, politically and militarily. “Old Europe” does not seem willing to accept junior-partner status in a world run by U.S. imperialism. All this despite — or perhaps because — U.S. bosses may control the flow of Mideast oil in the near future.

The EU Commission, EU’s executive branch, has solidified its political power behind a constitutional proposal for a permanent presidency, rotated between France and Germany. Not even waiting for passage of the EU constitution, the Commission has forged ahead in the economic and military realms.

Recently German-owned DHL worldwide express offered cash for the ground operations of Airborne, the U.S.’s third-largest package-delivery service, despite protests from UPS and Federal Express. DHL would have bought the air operations

as well, but U.S. laws prohibit foreign ownership of domestic airlines. The EU Commission has pushed for the U.S. to modify these laws as a condition for renegotiating “open skies” agreements. The EU Commission nullified past bi-lateral “open skies” agreements negotiated with the U.S. trade commission, which allowed U.S. carriers access to Europe, saying that now the EU alone will speak for all European airlines.

After the Kosovo war, the Europeans announced plans to build their own rapid deployment force. Since then, they’ve started on their own GPS satellite system and the A440M military transport plane to be built by Airbus Military. On March 26, German Defense Minister Peter Struck announced that the countries planning to build the A440M would use Russian Antonov transports rather than Boeing C-17s until the new aircraft are ready.

On the eve of the Iraq war, the EU Commission announced plans to form a pan-European defense acquisition and research bureau. This is the latest governmental body that binds various European ruling classes together, and could avoid years of haggling that such military projects usually entail. Not quite a nation-state, the EU is rapidly become more than a momentary alliance of nations.

The imperialist invasion of Iraq has been



Anti-war demonstrators block an air force base in Spain.

greeted with near universal condemnation from workers in Europe, culminating in a brief general strike across the continent. This points to opportunities for winning workers to communist politics worldwide. The EU will try to use this widespread anti-U.S. sentiment to provide a cover for the French and German rulers’ own imperialist ambitions to consolidate and increase political and military might versus U.S. bosses. This will drive them to intensify oppression of their own workers. The millions of Muslim workers in Germany and France know well the racism of

the cops and bosses of those countries. All EU workers and bosses have nothing in common in opposing U.S. war in Iraq.

It’s premature to say whether these latest moves by the EU Commission are harbingers of things to come. It does seem, however, that “shock and awe” has not slowed down the sharpening imperialist rivalry. Maintaining the empire will not come any cheaper in the days ahead. As Challenge says, capitalism means endless imperialist wars. ☸

‘The Mountain That Eats Men’

The 10-year-old miners of Potosi, Bolivia, are testimony to the cruelty and torture that capitalism forces on the children of the working class. They toil 12 hours a day so they and their families can barely survive before the mountain eats them alive, according to a New York Times report (3/24). Of course, the Times does not trace the miners’ plight to the profit system. But their situation is not a freak of nature. When mineral prices collapsed in 1985, all the miners were laid off. Then the government company abandoned them, forcing them to organize mining “cooperatives” to fend off starvation. The minerals bring the lowest possible price, because of the world crisis of capitalism, hitting this poor nation of 8.3 million, gripped by recession, particularly hard.

“In its heyday,” says the Times, “Potosi was as big and rich as London. Its silver helped build the Spanish Armada and bankrolled Spanish military expansion.” But 350 years under Spanish domination brought “the deaths of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Indians in the mines, ... falling to illness and starvation, or simply overwork.” The following are excerpts from the Times’ article:

Once so famed for its abundant silver that the Spanish named it Rich Mountain....today those who mine its seams call it the “Mountain That Eats Men.”

Here, 250 feet down in a warren of caverns, ...boys — as young as 10, most hardly 15 or 16 —clear rocks with picks and shovels and heave 100-pound loads on their bare backs....

Older miners, wheezing and slowly dying of lung disease, have trouble keeping up. By their 40’s most are finished. Few live past 50....The labor falls to their sons, until they, too, wither generation by generation.

The mountain does not discriminate. It eats boys, too.

“At first when I came into the mountain, I just cried,” said Grover....But I had to work....

Sweat pouring from under his helmet, he had

already worked 2 hours, and had 10 more to go....

There is no lighting. No rail cars to carry out minerals. No pumped oxygen. No safety regulations....No face masks or gloves or heavy work boots....

In an industry badly battered by collapsed commodity prices, poverty is the harshest taskmaster of all....The take is miniscule: miners make, at most, \$100 a month and usually far less.

In Latin America, languishing in its worst economic cycle in decades, the use of child labor is becoming more widespread....An estimated 800,000 children work in this country....

....The mountain itself appears devastated — heaps of slag and shavings have created noxious mounds of contaminants hundreds of feet high. Polluted water flows down its sides....

Into this labyrinth go Agustin Quispe, 46, and his son, Santos, 15....They buy sacks of coca leaves [to] chew to ward off hunger and fatigue. They will not eat during their entire 8 or 10 hours in the mountain....

The work is backbreaking....Rock slides are common. Fingers or limbs are often mangled. At least 21 miners were killed in the last two years. A 15-year-old was crushed to death in January....

“I regret this so much,” said Aurelio Isla, 35, who started mining when he was 12 and is now a victim of black lung disease, unable to draw a full breath....This mountain has finished me off....”

Grover said he had to stop going to school when his father, Severino, died two years ago. At 14, Grover quickly took his place in the mine, to help his mother and his siblings.

“There was no one else to take care of the family, and I was the oldest,” he said. “So I went in.” ☸

Fascist U.S. Prison System: Black/White Ratio is 7.5 to 1

With a U.S. prison population of 2,019,234 last year, the Bureau of Justice Statistics calculated that 28% of all black men will be imprisoned sometime in their lifetime. Right now, 12% of all black men between 20 and 34 are in jail, compared to 1.6% of white men in the same age bracket.

The largest number of convictions stem from drugs, two-thirds of which are non-violent crimes. (In Texas, possession of 4 ounces of marijuana gets

corrupt racist cops (as in LA and Miami) has resulted in HALF the inmates in this country’s prisons being black (although they constitute only one-tenth of the total population).

Illegal drug use among white men is approximately the same as for black men. Yet because of the above racist factors, “black men are five times as likely to be arrested for drug offenses” as are white men. (Atlantic Monthly, Dec. 1998, p. 57)

Black men — 10% of the male population in the U.S. — are imprisoned at more than FOUR times the rate of black men in South Africa, where they constitute 75% of the male population!

up to two years in prison.) Federal law mandates five years without parole for possession of 5 grams (one-sixth of an ounce) of crack cocaine. But for POWDER cocaine, 500 grams — one hundred times as much — is required for a 5-year sentence. The overwhelming majority of crack users are black and Latino. The overwhelming majority of powder users are middle- and upper-class whites. This “war on drugs” is a essentially a racist war on black and Latino workers and youth.

This combination of long prison terms for non-violent offenders possessing an ounce or two of crack cocaine, the zeroing in on the predominantly black areas of big cities by racist police forces, and the framing of tens of thousands of black youth by

Black men — 10% of the male population in the U.S. — are imprisoned at more than FOUR times the rate of black men in South Africa, where they constitute 75% of the male population! And once in prison, inmates — half of them black — are subjected to slave labor, producing goods for big corporations at “wage” rates of 23¢ an hour.

The Civil War presumably ended slavery for black people in 1865. Now U.S. capitalism has succeeded in re-introducing slavery into the largest prison system in world history. (For a complete analysis of this slave labor prison system, see PLP pamphlet: “Prison Labor: Fascism U.S. Style,” available on our website — www.PLP.org) ☸